



EXCLUSIVE!

**Agenda Scribe Sexually
Harasses KHOU Starlet!**



RON PAUL

**Jury Rebuffs ATF
in Idaho Trial**



ZONING...

**Threat or
Menace?**

Houston Agenda

Vol. 2 No. 4

A Look at Current Issues

August 1993



SEX

*and politics
at the library*

Christin Hartung's
Dirty Books



**WHY YOU CAN'T
TRUST KHOU'S
GREEN JOURNALISM**



WEATHER



Showers of bribery allegations sink Judge John Lindsay's reelection forecast. Hartung's hot and cold review of good sex-bad sex sends ripples throughout lower elevations. Barometric pressure up. Hurricane season brings possibility of high winds from political debate on zoning.



WHY THE HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY IS ON LIFE SUPPORT.

HOW WE CAN SAVE IT

BY NICOLAS S. MARTIN

A great library contains the diary of the human race.

—H. W. Beecher

First in virtue among city institutions, the public library was long venerated by Americans. Civic pride often manifested itself in grand and hospitable book warehouses with imposing collections. More often than not, prior to the demolition of culture by TV, the person who ached for self-improvement was directed to the "hospital for the mind," not some addled support group.

Today these soul clinics are themselves ailing. Their budgets have been whacked, their independence called into question, and their administrations sodden with bureaucracy and politics. The library environment descends increasingly to the tone of a postal branch or unemployment office, though frustration among the bookies seems less prone to result in gunplay.

While many city governments have exploded in size and budget, it is a rare municipality where the local library has shared in the loot. In Houston the situation has been somewhat unique, but equally disturbing. In 1987, the city's total spending was almost \$1.4 billion, out of which \$3.9 million was the public library's materials budget, for books, films, et cetera. In 1993, the city's spending has been forcibly slimmed to \$890

million, while the library materials budget has sunk to a piddling \$2.7 million. To look at it another way, the city's budget came down by 36 percent and the library materials budget shrank by 31 percent. So, while the city has been relatively compassionate in its treatment of the public library, the result is still a system devastated by budget reductions.

Madonna and Twain

In addition to financial contusions, city libraries also suffer the odd bloodletting over the content of their inventories, which are variously criticized for sexism, racism, anti-semitism, obscenity, and more.

A couple of years ago the local gendarmes descended upon a Cincinnati art museum and charged the director with obscenity for displaying the photographs of the dead homosexual, Robert Mapplethorpe. These pictures included one of a man with a bullwhip protruding from his bottom, and second photo of a fellow serving as the receptacle for his partner's liquid excrement. Instantly it became one of the most popular museum exhibits in the history of Cincinnati, long identified as the heart of the country's anti-pornography movement. (Savings and Loan Crisis con artist Charles Keating, Jr. first gained fame as a Queen City purity crusader.)

Meanwhile, the Cincinnati Public Library had in its collection a coffee table edition of these same Mapplethorpe pictures, available to all comers. This did not sit well with some residents, but the officials who busted the museum were not emboldened to bring an obscenity charge against the library, and the book remained in the stacks.

Similarly, as Madonna's book *Sex* mounted the best-seller list, Houston Public Library (HPL) was reported to have a copy on order, which, due to her publisher's decision not to print a second edition, never materialized. Learning of the order, hundreds of people called and wrote to the library and city officials to protest the procurement of what they considered to be pornography. As a result of the public snit, several copies of *Sex* were donated to the library where they have remained as reference items to this day.

At various times and places, groups have demanded the banishment from libraries of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Twain's *Huck Finn*, and thousands of other books deemed immoral, inaccurate, or offensive. Sometimes libraries stand resolute in defense of free choice, other times they knuckle under to pressure by the hands that feed them.

The Bureaucracy Problem

Compared to Federal Express, the U.S. Postal Service is monstrously outmoded and inefficient. Similarly, public schools are often outperformed on every level by private ones, and even by parents who teach their kids at home. By almost any measure of care, socialized medical systems are inferior to their free market counterparts. Governments build crummy cars, dangerous power plants, and miserable agricultural systems. Is it any surprise, then, that government libraries suffer from comparable inefficiencies and ineptitudes?

Ten years after fax machines began to gain wide usage, the Houston Public Library can only vaguely sense that they might be used to improve service, and their purchase is said to be years away. At a time when many small restaurants, printers, and office suppliers are taking orders by fax, the Houston Public Library puts callers to its reference department on hold for 15 minutes or more. For that matter, it is not even possible to call another department, say Social Sciences, without first enduring the torment of holding for the reference department to answer. Telephone reference has 42 lines, but only 5 or 6 people manning those lines to field queries and to serve as the answering service for all other departments. The personal computer revolution has meant as much to the library as conscience does to a politician. From your den in Tanglewilde, you can call up as much information about the San Mateo, California Parks and Recreation department from your home computer as you can about HPL.

Circulating materials are obviously the lifeblood of the library. Yet it wasn't until 1992 that HPL hired a collection agency to track down people with overdue and stolen library books. Is it imaginable that Blockbuster Video would allow thousands of tapes to go unreturned for years before enforcing their repossession? Library officials can't begin to calculate how many books have disappeared over the years; they have no reliable method for tracking inventory. If a patron requests a book from the inactive

stacks and the book is not located, the assisting librarian simply shrugs his shoulders. Any business which operates like this is destined for a date with bankruptcy court; but this sort of bureaucratic bungling is normal for institutions which get their money from taxpayers rather than operating in the open marketplace. There are no rewards for efficiency, and no penalties for inefficiency.

HPL has some bright and capable employees, but no special benefits alight on the more diligent staffer. The library eschews ordinary business practices; and since the entire library culture is that of a socialized



bureaucracy, even the best employees learn to grumble and fall in line. As a rule, librarians look askance at the rough and tumble of business. Instead, they are serving a higher purpose, removed from tasteless competition. They don't have customers, they have patrons, thank you.

One exquisite example of bureaucratic logic at HPL: In 1989 the Fine Arts department distributed a survey asking patrons what sort of audio recordings they enjoyed and would like the library to buy. After responses had been gathered for several weeks, a patron asked the librarian in charge of the survey when it would be published and whether it would be used to guide future purchases. The librarian responded that the results would not be circulated, and that the library had already made its music purchasing decisions before the survey was ever circulated! Pity the poor idiot who imagined his vote might count for more than a Nigerian's. In contrast, a commercial bookstore engages in an unceasing survey of customer wants, often resulting in overnight additions and improvements.

If Jazz is your music, take a look at the HPL's CD collection. Does it excel in the classics, like Ellington, Basie, Holiday? Does it feature distinguished contemporaries, like Wynton Marsalis? Does it reveal a pattern of purchasing which maximizes selection and value? Three resounding *nadas*. There is pitifully little of the anthology of the vintage Jazz performers who crafted the most important indigenous American music form, and less of the important contemporary standard-bearers. It's as though the selection committee said, "Ellington is supposed to be important, let's buy one Ellington disk." That parsimony, though, applies less to classical music, which is abundant and varied. One hopes that this is not because the library staff holds Black American music in low esteem, but one wonders.

It seems that the policy is to buy three of

each disk. It doesn't matter if the album is a classic or disposable schlock: the rule is three. Apparently, this is because it makes it more likely that one disk will be available if three are in the collection. This means, obviously, that only one-third as many different titles are thus owned; the collection is two-thirds less varied. Indisputably, if the library owned only one copy of an album it would more likely be checked out when you went to find it. But you could place a reserve on that borrowed title and have it in due time. If the title has never been purchased—in favor of the second and third copy of something that

would rather watch his institution decay to primordial mud than repudiate the idea of free loans. Free circulation is the Holy Grail of the library bureaucracy. You are more likely to convince gun owners to repeal the Second Amendment, or journalists the First, than to talk librarians into charging patrons.

Librarians have made the free lunch (as in, there is no such thing...) the law of the state of Texas. They have taken a notion which was as wise 200 years ago as it is spectacularly idiotic today, and they have enshrined it in the glorious heritage of political domination.

Circulating materials are obviously the lifeblood of the library. Yet it wasn't until 1992 that HPL hired a collection agency to track down people with overdue and stolen library books. Is it imaginable that Blockbuster Video would allow thousands of tapes to go unreturned for years before enforcing their repossession?

doesn't interest you—you will never hear it at all.

For regular library patrons, it is hardly necessary to pass comment on the inattentive, often surly, attitude of library employees. Just like the post office.

The Solution

Figuring in inflation, the library has lost almost half of its annual materials budget in the past six years, while patronage has remained steady. The staff is acutely aware of the compromise in selection and service due to insufficient budget, but they cannot imagine any solution beyond waiting for the tax spigot to be turned back on. (Apparently Mayor Lanier assures them this will happen soon.) The staff must be developing empathy for the dialysis patient who waits for a donor kidney while his own deteriorates.

If you want to trigger convulsions in a librarian, the easiest way is to suggest that his library charge patrons for borrowing materials. This strikes at the heart of the fully socialized bureaucrat. It conjures up images of expectations, hard work, responsiveness, even ruthless capitalism.

That reaction is not unique to HPL; the bureaucratic malaise is a universal characteristic of public libraries, the same way lower SAT scores are a feature of almost all public schools. In Cincinnati, the public library charges for video tape rentals, which they consider quite normal and justified, but try to tell them that it would be equally sensible to charge for books and they hit the roof. In Houston, the library can't imagine charging for video tapes. (Why do libraries loan video tapes, anyway? Is there a shortage of video rental stores? Do the video stores love to compete with the government, which hands out product for free? Public libraries shouldn't stock popular movies at all, free or not.)

If you press the idea of fees for materials, you will discover that the typical librarian

This is a nation where "poor" kids wear \$120 tennis shoes; where welfare recipients have color TVs; where the underclass is so well-off—says the same legislature which imposed the free library law—that they can pay \$500 a year for car insurance; where the "sin" tax on cigarettes is hailed by compassionate progressives despite falling disproportionately on food stamp users. But it is not a country where people can pay a quarter to rent a book. Actually, that's not quite correct. They can pay a lot more than a quarter, and with a clean conscience, if it is squeezed out of them by the tax collector. Asking people who actually use the library to pay their way is immoral, but forcing people who never use the library to pay for those who do is virtuous. So goes political logic.

Librarians assiduously harp that the "poor" will lose access to materials if a cost is imposed. There is no evidence to support this. The "poor" keep R. J. Reynolds in business; they sustain many a liquor store; they are the foundation of state lotteries, and the friend of every impulse-buy convenience store owner. If patrons had to pay for loans, librarians would immediately yelp that the poor were being deprived of Shakespeare's sonnets, which might be plausible if the poor were big fans of Shakespeare today. Perhaps we're just misinterpreting Rap lyrics. (You may notice, incidentally, that poor people are perfectly capable of paying to use copying machines at the library.)

The truth is, according to HPL's public information office, that no data have ever been collected revealing the economic status of patrons. For all the administration knows, our "free" library has no higher percentage of "poor" patrons than video, record, or book stores. The library does, however, have a much higher ratio of unwashed indigents who roam the stacks and crawl the floors sneaking peeks at female undergarments.

The argument for charging patrons occupies two categories: practical and ethical.

On the first score, the collection is dismal and getting worse fast. Many books are in lousy shape, and thousands of others are simply AWOL. Many superb titles are never bought. If HPL were a hospital it wouldn't have needles and catheters, much less CAT scanners and sonograms.

Why is it that retail information sellers—video, record, and book stores—are thriving, while the toll-free variety—public libraries—are emaciated?

On the second score, why should taxpayers—like those offended by Madonna's comic book—have to pay for its inclusion in the library's collection? Why should anti-abortionists have to pay for materials which promote abortion? Why should pacifists have to foot the bill for books which monger war.

Why is it ethically superior to *compel* support for expression than to *prohibit* expression? If speech is so important that its support must be compelled, why doesn't government exact a subsidy for newspapers? Why aren't people compelled to purchase cable TV? Why isn't Rush Limbaugh funded by the National Endowment for the Arts?

If I am pie-eyed over Madonna, Limbaugh, or Tracy Lords, I shouldn't expect some taxpayer who detests them to pay for my dopey pleasures. By the same token, if no tax money is involved, morality crusaders forfeit the right to involve themselves in library materials selection and policy making.

The exploitation of tax dollars for library funding unfairly pulverizes the moral preferences of conservatives. It also gives vice fanatics the excuse to demand that adults have nothing more lusty to read than *The Virgin's Guide to Self-preservation*.

Patrons and Patronage

It is time to throw out the obsolete, destructive tax-and-spend library paradigm. Librarians should brace for the end of adolescence and the beginning of an adulthood where they learn not to sponge off mom and dad. They should discover that it is more honorable to solicit voluntary contributions than to expect the political bandits to smuggle them enough to get by on each year.

If we want hollow, intellectually moribund libraries, let's continue on the present path; we've almost reached our goal. If we want exciting, bustling, evolving institutions, with computers, faxes, phones that work, and an obsession with customer service, then let's take the library off welfare and put it on workfare. Make HPL earn its way back to respectability.

By privatizing the library we would create a more capable, independent institution.

Right now it's like a Third World country that blows its annual World Bank allocation and comes crawling back for more. As long as dependency rules, the situation can never improve, unless the government strikes oil. The HPL constantly awaits the next big strike, and it just isn't going to come. The mayor and council will keep the patient on minimal life-support so that they can't be blamed for his demise. They'll ritually announce their loyal support for the library, like Chinese politburo members do when they trot out some petrified political fossil. The politicians just want to make sure HPL remains in their pockets so they can hand out new branches as juicy political plums and control the flow of patronage.

How difficult would self-sufficiency be to attain? If each of the library's 850,000 cardholders paid a nominal \$10 yearly for borrowing privileges, the library would start with a revenue base three times as large as the materials budget it has today. Charging a quarter per item circulated would bring in another \$2 million a year. Then there are fees that could be charged for computer searches, facility and equipment rentals, research assistance, and a host of services presently non-

existent. As industry saw the transformation of the library into a lean, modern system, corporate donations would pour in. Wouldn't Compaq love to reach an intelligent, well-read audience by becoming the "official sponsor of the Business department" for \$100,000 a year? Put Conoco's logo on tote bags, and a Phillips 66 dust cover on every book: the possibilities are endless. Philanthropic donations would defray the cost of serving people genuinely unable to afford the cost of library services.

The Texas Library Systems Act, better named the Librarian Welfare Protection Act, should be repealed. This is the foolish law which prevents libraries from even considering modernization. Librarians, the special interest group which got this law passed, shouldn't have it around to excuse their free market phobia.

If the Romanians can depose Ceausescu, the Germans can knock down the wall, and the Argentines can privatize their precious national oil company, can't Houstonians do what's necessary to create a vast, uninhibited, and flourishing library?

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CORRECTION

In our June issue, the cover photo of the Billy Blues saxophone were by photographer Todd Yates. The photos of the various non-conforming real estate properties in the feature were by photographer Ken Rabalais.

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SEX, STACKS & TAXES, pt. 2

Into the groove

MADONNA STIMULATES OUTCRY
FROM COUNCILWOMAN HARTUNG

BY NICOLAS S. MARTIN

Quickly vaulting to the front of the parade of Madonna's *Sex* critics was comely councilwoman Christin Hartung, herself possessed of a fondness for bawdy novels. She suggested to Mayor Lanier that it might be a good idea if a citizen's committee was empowered to evaluate books donated to the library as to their conformity with community values. The mayor showing no interest in her idea, it petered out along with the debate over *Sex*.

A decent interval having passed, and scores of library patrons having fondled reference editions of *Sex*, the *Agenda* recently returned to Ms. Hartung to ask her flesh out her proposal and reflect on its prudence in light of subsequent events. Did she still think a citizen's oversight committee was needed? How did she respond to critics who accused her of advocating censorship? We put the questions to her.

The oversight committee the councilwoman advocates, "would advise the city on book donations," she says. "It would be similar to the arts commission that advises the city on art donations. When people offer to donate art to [the city], we don't just accept any piece of art that's offered. We have a committee of citizens who look at it and decide if its something that we want to accept." Given authority only over donations to the library, Ms. Hartung concedes that only "a very

small" number of books would be evaluated. The mass of materials purchased by the library would remain indisposed to citizen review.

The frenzy over Madonna seems to have been the only trigger for her review committee proposal. "I looked at the book from cover to cover and I personally found it obscene," she says. "My point is, that its such a controversial book that if adults want to spend the \$50 to buy it that they ought to have the opportunity to do that, but that we have such a short book budget that I have worked ceremoniously to try to increase over the last few years."

Wouldn't the advisory committee become a magnet for groups demanding censorship? Might some moslems demand that the library not accept books by Salmon Rushdie? Might some anti-abortionists argue that pro-abortion books be excluded? Might some liberals wish to bar books which aren't "politically correct"? Ms. Hartung acknowledges that prospect and says that those are precisely the sort of citizen objections that should be taken seriously. "When you're talking about a public facility, you really need to think about everyone involved. There is lots of art donated that is never put up at City Hall. For one reason we may not have enough room, and another reason is it may not be

appropriate."

With apparent inconsistency, the councilwoman seems exclusively to focus her interest on donated materials. She defends the judgement of the library staff in deciding which books to purchase. "That's why we have a library director," she notes. "They look at what the needs of the city are, and they look at the type of requests they need, and they know what their readership is. A lot of the pocketbooks that they purchase are a little bit racy; stuff that I read. I read practically everything on the *New York Times* bestseller list. I don't think that we should be censors; I tread a real thin line there."

Thin Blue Line

Ms. Hartung's critics suggest that the line is so thin as to be invisible.

Director of the Texas ACLU, Jay Jacobson, rejects the oversight committee out of hand. "This country was founded on the notion that individuals should be allowed to form their own opinions, unfettered from government approval. The function of the library is to provide citizens with the widest array of idea and opinions, and once our librarians lose their independence the republic is in jeopardy. In essence, what you are talking about is censorship."

The censorship warning is also sounded

from other quarters. For example, Pati Stevens, of the Committee for Justice for Women, says that she doubts an advisory group can be populated with discerning and impartial members. "How do you know that somebody's non-political? How do you know that they're thoughtful; that they don't have a religious agenda? I'm very uncomfortable about committees attempting to impose their viewpoint, even if they feel [their decisions are] well thought-out and non-political. By the very nature of a committee like that it becomes political."

Even Paul McClintock, an activist in the conservative faction of the Republican Party, expresses some hesitation about intrusion on library freedom, though he concludes that

"having to pay taxes to support the promotion of a view you oppose is obviously a tremendous concern." Ultimately he sheds his reservation in declaring that "government—and that includes city government and public libraries—has a responsibility to serve the public in a morally justifiable way, and that includes the society's morals."

Ms. Hartung's defenders include abortion opponents, anti-obscenity conservatives, and some unashamed defenders of censorship. "I'm a fan of Christin Hartung," says Gray Wakefield, of the Houston Family Association. "If she was interested in this then I think it deserves some thought."

Suzanne Reynolds, President of Texas Right to Life, says that "a lot of the pro-abor-

tion material include statements that are really not the truth." Because of that she thinks it would be proper for a Hartung committee to prevent pro-abortion texts from being ensconced in the library. On occasion, Ms. Reynolds notes that she has been so mortified by titles she purchased that she has "torn out parts of the book into little pieces and flushed them down the commode because I really was shocked that anybody could even write it."

Geneva Kirk Brooks, president of Citizens Against Pornography (CAP), says the prospect of a Hartung advisory group is "wonderful." She is sure the group would prevent placement in the library of books she finds offensive. "I've screamed and hollered

for [such a group] for 20 years," Ms. Brooks exclaims. "People tell me that you can't legislate morality. Well, we can try." Another member of CAP, requesting anonymity, says that the advisory group is a good idea, because "with citizens having the say they can help ban books like Madonna's."

Ms. Brooks claims to have many supporters for her anti-porn campaign, but none more ardent than local moslems. "Which religious group has invited me the most often to speak? It's been the moslems. They have been the biggest supporters." Perhaps devout moslems will form Councilwoman Hartung's core constituency in her reelection effort.

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SEX, STACKS & TAXES, pt. 3



For Ladies Only Christin Hartung has no scruples about reading "racy" bestsellers

While Councilwoman Hartung may have been offended by Madonna's version of sex, she acknowledges a penchant for best-selling novels which "are a bit racy." She reads, she says, "practically everything on the *New York Times* bestseller list." Despite our unfamiliarity with prurient matter, as a public service the *Agenda* has foraged the current *Times* bestsellers to unearth a nugget for the councilwoman's literary delectation. The following are passages from the "dazzling sequel," *Scruples Two*, ejaculated from the word processor of one of the century's unremittably successful authors, Judith Krantz.

Vito, still kneeling, inclined his head between her legs and soon she felt the brush of his lips on her pubic hair, just a whisper of a touch as the skin of his subtle lips barely made contact with the soft, fine hairs of the blond triangle. At first he only used his lips and his nose to browse questingly in that hair, nuzzling her and inhaling her fragrance...Her eyes closed when she finally felt the point of his tongue bare-



ly touching her outer lips, running delicately along their rim, leaving a wet trail in its wake. Over and over his tongue retraced its path, ignoring her inner lips that were pouting in expectation like the petals of a flower...his tongue descended cautiously into the channel that lay between her inner and outer lips, parting them with the utmost care, its heat traveling moistly between them as he lapped his fill, carefully avoiding making any contact with her clitoris. That small, deep pink, blunt arrow of her living flesh grew larger and harder.

Disbelievingly, just as she was about to put her hands on his head and push her clitoris up into his mouth...his lips dawdled cannily as they descended toward the fine globes of her bottom...she felt his fingers parting the globes so that he could insert his tongue between them,

she didn't move, even when his tongue probed ever more deeply...she let Vito finally suck her clitoris deeply into his mouth...He rose and flung himself on the couch, so that he was bestride her on his knees, his straining penis clasped in one hand, the other holding her thighs apart roughly. Their eyes met and held.

"Ask for it," Vito said.

"Never."

"Ask for it."

She used all the muscles of her strong legs to push them together, so forcefully that he was unable to keep them apart with only one hand.

"You ask," Susan whispered, putting her own fingers over her tautly swollen clitoris and rubbing with a flickering expertise, seeming to be absorbed in the pleasure she was giving herself, watching him grow more avid as her rhythm quickened. Helplessly Vito saw her approaching an orgasm without him.

"Stop that!"

"Ask me nicely," she panted without stopping.

"You win, you bitch!"



Strike a pose.
Councilwoman Hartung
looking ceremonious.

Madonna book which offended Ms. Hartung, albeit without the pictures. Within these few passages we

find these adventures:

- A depiction of raw carnal activity
- playful overtones of sadomasochism
- vivid descriptions of the look, feel, and odor of female genitalia
- florid illustration of cunnilingus
- a bit of anilingus (oral-anal sex)

There is nothing extraordinary about these passages; they and similar ones are read and enjoyed by countless millions of virtuous American women. The thing that's hard to figure is why Councilwoman Hartung would regularly entertain herself with such writings and then forge to the head of the mob in declaring Madonna's *Sex* to be obscene. While it was pictorial, *Sex* was actually far less detailed in its sexual depictions than the citations above.

We're not psychologists, but we offer one possible explanation for Ms. Hartung's seeming inconsistency of taste. When we interviewed her she observed incorrectly that "very few people" were interested in *Sex*. She seemed unaware that the book had topped the beloved bestseller list, or that the library's copies had been fabulously popular. It does not surprise us that a politician—ever sensitive to public opinion—feels at home with "racy" novels shared by millions, while shunning a picture book she assumes only appeals to a tiny audience. She probably just miscalculated the demographics.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

For those who may be offended by our frankness...

There may be those who share with the editor of this paper a discomfort with the kind of sexual depiction reproduced in the adjoining article. Please be assured that our purpose in including these passages is not to be offensive or tasteless, and we are sorry if you are offended.

Our purpose, though, is to illustrate the inconsistency of a public official who has taken the lead in condemning one book she deems "obscene," while unapologetically edifying herself with books denounced as "pornography" by others who concern themselves with public morality.

We read the Krantz passages to University of Houston humanities professor. She judged a portion to be "beautiful," though she objected to the use of "bitch." On the other hand, Geneva Kirk Brooks, of Citizens Against Pornography (CAP), told the *Agenda* that the passages are "trash which should only be available in x-rated bookstores." To each her own.

The millions of upstanding ladies who enjoy Judith Krantz, and comparable authors, obviously side with Ms. Hartung. They purchase titillating books from

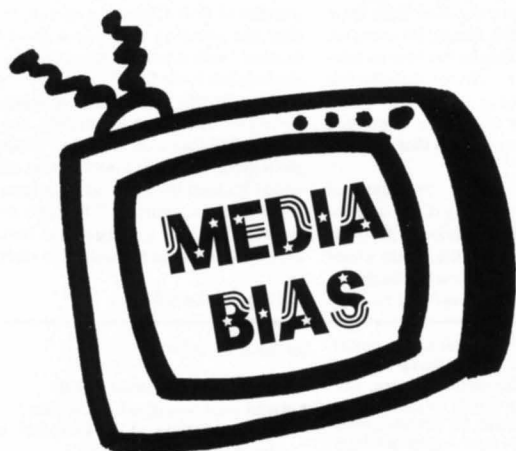
supermarkets, bookstores, and pharmacies in staggering numbers. They also borrow them from the public library.

We won't make a habit of publishing sexually frank material (even though some people will probably think it is the best stuff we've ever run), but we think it was essential to illustrate the point we were making in this instance.

To illustrate her own point, CAP's Ms. Brooks distributes copies of a photo of the naked bottom and genitals of a woman she copied from *Hustler* magazine. To us, she also faxed a copy of a letter, containing words that begin with "C," "M," and "P" that we would not publish in our paper. But on the same basis that we defend Ms. Hartung's access to "racy" bestselling novels, we also exhort the vice squad not to make an example of Ms. Brooks with her *Hustler* pictures. If these two virtuous ladies are stymied, who will defend our libraries and beaches?

We are anxious to have your comments about the debate over the library and censorship. Please put them in the form of a letter so that we might share them with our readers.

by Nicolas S. Martin



LOST IN THE OZONE

**HAZE COVERS GREEN REPORTING
AT CHANNEL 11 . . . FILM AT 10**

*"The press stands in approximately the same relation to
life as reading tea leaves stands to metaphysics"*

Karl Kraus

As a rule, television news reporters love doing environmental stories, since they have the elements of scandal and catastrophe which make for great TV. The segments are pagan sermonettes, scolding us for our callous treatment of Mother Earth, and supplying experts who warn us to mend our filthy, profligate ways. Environmental reporting dovetails nicely with the social progressivism of reporters, the obsession of Americans with health at any cost, and the vanity of experts. But they are a lousy source of valid information about science or the environment.

Information is beside the point in these productions. The viewer isn't meant to evaluate the facts of a story. In 90 seconds or fewer, the reporter preaches a little doom-and-gloom, blends in the sound bites of the expert whose views confirm the reporters worst fears, and breezes to the exhortation for us to wise up.

This sort of reporting is almost a daily ritual on news shows around the country, including Houston's. It is precisely this kind of journalism which galvanizes popular sentiment about pollution, the Greenhouse Effect, pesticide toxicity, and the other safety concerns. Green reporting is to journalism what brown shirts were to National Socialists: a powerful symbol of being on the "right side."

A sample report

I was sure it would be illuminating to dissect a single example of environmental reporting on a local TV station. For my experiment I selected a piece which appeared on the KHOU evening news, Sunday, August 1.

This report fit the model for environmental reporting described above. I chose it because it was typical, not exceptional. I have no reason to believe that green reporting at KHOU is better or worse than at other Houston stations. If truth is the target, the aim of green reporting falls well short in most instances. Many scientists think eco-journalism has become as hazardous to the public as a poorly tuned car. The latter pollutes the air, the former the airwaves.

The reporter covering the story was Vicky Cooper, who has been with KHOU for

just five weeks. Before that she was the producer of the Health Line series for the Baylor College of Medicine, an experience which should, one imagines, equip her satisfactorily for green journalism.

In her story, Ms. Cooper planted several propositions for viewers to harvest. Then she wheeled out two experts who supposedly confirmed her impressions. She seasoned her brew with the opinion of a young woman she and her crew happened upon at Memorial Park.

The reporter based her story on this primary idea: the lungs of people who engage in strenuous exertion may be permanently damaged on hot days when street-level ozone concentrations are elevated. As if one major scientific controversy weren't enough for this journalist, she also spent part of her 90 seconds reporting her impression that depletion of stratospheric ozone is leading to an increase in skin cancer. (To make this clear, there are two scientific controversies. The first is that there is too much ozone close to the Earth's surface. The second is that pollution is causing atmospheric ozone to be destroyed too rapidly, hence the famous ozone "holes." While they both involve ozone, the two issues are unrelated.)

The person at KHOU who assigned Ms. Cooper to report such a story clearly assumed that ozone pollution is a problem. How long would a journalist keep her job who reported that "despite the erroneous beliefs of my boss, there is no ozone health hazard"?

In my interview with her, Ms. Cooper told me that there were several days of preparation for the report. She confirmed that the news staff "did call around earlier in the week to find some people" to interview. It is evident that this was not a spontaneous, unplanned story, and there was plenty of time to collect a broad sample of expert opinion, read some science articles, or even to kill the story for lack of evidence.

For the story to make sense, it had to convince viewers of the following things:

- ozone is causing lung damage
- ozone levels in Houston were at hazardous levels at the time of her report
- ozone is being depleted from the stratosphere
- ozone depletion causes ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun to reach Earth in greater amounts
- greater (UV) radiation levels have led to more skin cancer
- the "man on the street" is a health expert

Ozone is a health hazard

For her story to have power, Ms. Cooper had to at least prove that ozone was a health threat to the people shown jogging on that hot Sunday. To gain that proof she turned to Dr. William Eschenbacher, pulmonary specialist at Baylor, because "he is the one who did the health studies." She came away from that interview more firm than ever in her view that the ozone levels in question were a definite hazard. What did Dr. Eschenbacher say to convince her?

Not much. I interviewed Dr. Eschenbacher the day after her report aired. He explained to me that he doesn't believe there is sufficient evidence to prove that ozone—in the levels in Houston air—causes lasting lung damage. (In considerably higher

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amounts, ozone unquestionably harms lungs. The first rule of toxicology is "the dose makes the poison." Everything, including oxygen and water, can be deadly.)

From the outset, the doctor's opinion directly contradicted the major point of Ms. Cooper's story. He said that "some experts at the EPA would like to make a connection between pollution and chronic lung diseases, but we don't have the data [to prove such a connection]." Further, Dr. Eschenbacher noted that the existing data "are circumstantial and not as solid as we would need to prove a causal relationship [between ozone pollution and lung disease]." He said that research has "a long way to go" before proving such a relationship.

Ms. Cooper must have been so enamored of her "Lungs Destroyed By Ozone Pollution" headline that she overlooked the fact that her major expert completely disavowed it. In our interview, she still insisted that Dr. Eschenbacher supported her scary premise, despite the fact that his forthright position is that there is no conclusive evidence that such a hazard exists. Unfortunately, Dr. Eschenbacher's reservations about the ozone hazard never made it into the reporter's story, and she provided no other expert to corroborate her assumption.

As more proof of her careless listening, Ms. Cooper told me that the doctor's lab studies exposed subjects to "about 1.5 ppm" of ozone. In fact, that dose would be life threatening. The actual exposure of the doctor's subjects is about 90 percent less than that amount.

Verdict: The reporter produced no evidence that ozone pollution is a health threat.

Ozone levels in Houston were at hazardous levels at the time of her report

If there is no proof that ozone pollution poses the threat of chronic lung disease, it stands to reason that it would be difficult to link that unproven hazard to people in Houston. But that was, after all, the purpose of her report, so the reporter persevered on the momentum of her own conviction that the threat was real.

Did Ms. Cooper ask Dr. Eschenbacher about the specific risks of ozone pollution in Houston? "No," she told me, "we talked about [the risks] just in general, because generally we didn't get very specific for television stories." Did Ms. Cooper ask the doctor how a person might determine the conditions under which there might be a health risk from ozone? "We didn't get into that at all," she replied. Did she inquire how often people are exposed to ozone levels which might present a hazard? "No, no we didn't get into that at all," she insisted. "We talked just about when things are very warm, when there's sunlight and there are cars around; it exhibits certain chemicals..." Did her experts tell her whether the alleged problem had gotten better or worse? "No."

It appeared momentarily that she might have uncovered one bit of support for her scary headline from the second expert she interviewed, University of Houston physics professor W. R. Sheldon. When I asked her if there was evidence that ozone pollution was increasing she exclaimed, "Absolutely. In fact I think that was one of the [sound] bites from Dr. Sheldon, [although] we might not have put that in [the story]. He said it has

increased one percent per year."

Actually Dr. Sheldon's "bite" was included in the store as it aired, but Ms. Cooper's recollection of it couldn't be more faulty. The doctor was talking about atmospheric ozone—not surface pollution—and he said the levels were going down by one percent per year, not up as Ms. Cooper collected.

According to Dr. Eschenbacher, "Most of the monitoring stations have shown a decrease in ozone levels in Houston" in recent years.

Verdict: The reporter found no evidence that ozone pollution in Houston is a health hazard.

Ozone is being depleted from the stratosphere

At first Ms. Cooper denied that she carried any biases into her story, but she changed her tune by the time I asked whether she

believe that the scientists at the Baylor college of Medicine and the University of Houston know what they're talking about.

Apparently this budding green reporter is unaware and uninterested in the fact that scientists often disagree about scientific issues, just as politicians disagree about politics. Most environmental controversies are controversies because the evidence isn't conclusive. It is rank arrogance for a reporter to pick one side in a scientific debate and declare it the winner. It is naive to think that a scientist isn't touched by the same vanity and prejudices as the ordinary person, or that he won't put the best face on his opinions for the TV camera. It is a reporter's job to separate fact from opinion, not just count heads. Scientific veracity is not established by majority votes.

Ms. Cooper located only one scientist to express an opinion about ozone loss: Dr.

to ozone depletion. Actually, the opposite has happened.

Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) regularly take measurements which have revealed a steady drop in surface UV radiation since 1974. NOAA scientists also report that UV flux over the U.S. has declined by five to 18 percent during this century.

Dr. Sheldon acknowledged to me that he did not know of these reports on declining radiation levels. If Ms. Cooper had bothered to ask him, though, he would have told her what he told me. When I asked him, point blank, if he knew of any studies which show increasing radiation levels, he said, "In fact, I do not."

When I asked Ms. Cooper why she didn't inquire about decreasing UV radiation, she said, "I don't think that that's true [that the levels are declining]." In the face of a complete absence of evidence, she appointed her-



"I have no idea if pollution caused her asthma, or if pollution made it worse," the reporter told me. "She feels that it makes it worse; and that's what you put on television is what people believe about themselves."

said had concluded there was an stratospheric ozone depletion problem. "Yes, indeed we said there was a hole in the ozone and that it's being depleted. We said it's increasing down here on the ground. We definitely said that."

Does KHOU have conclusive proof that stratospheric ozone is being depleted by humans? The only evidence their reporter offered was the opinion of Dr. Sheldon, and he would readily admit that his opinion is far from the final word on the subject. In fact, some of the top atmospheric scientists in the world do not agree that human activity is harming the Earth's ozone layer.

For instance, Dr. Robert T. Watson, head of NASA's upper atmospheric research program, has said that his group does not believe that ozone changes in the atmosphere are man-caused. The evidence is strong, he noted, "that meteorological processes alone can effectively depress areas of ozone over the Antarctic continent." *Science* magazine summarized the evidence by saying that "the recent [ozone] losses may be natural and may result from long-term fluctuations of the general circulation of the atmosphere."

Ms. Cooper says that KHOU overlooked researchers who do not agree with the man-made ozone depletion theory because, "Apparently we didn't know that those people existed." Additionally, she told me the following:

What we try to do is go with what the majority of scientists believe. I haven't spoke with every scientist on the face of the Earth. But the scientists that I did speak with told me this and I have to go with what the scientists say. Once again I do

Sheldon. He told her he supported the man-made ozone depletion theory, and since his viewpoint supported her original bias, that is the view which was represented in her story.

Verdict: Ms. Cooper chose only one side of the scientific debate over ozone loss and presented it as an established fact.

Ozone depletion and skin cancer

One of the essential tenants of the ozone depletion theory is that stratospheric ozone loss will lead to greater UV radiation levels reaching the Earth's surface. It is thought that the ozone layer blocks the entry of UV radiation through the atmosphere.

Ms. Cooper's story included speculation by Dr. Sheldon that increased UV radiation was already harming humans and plants. This is plausible since the number of skin cancer cases in the U.S. (skin cancer is caused by UV radiation) has gone up dramatically in recent years. But did Ms. Cooper elicit evidence from the doctor to support his speculation?

When I interviewed Dr. Sheldon, he acknowledged that he was not an expert on the biological effects of radiation. "I'm not a biologist; I don't do that," he said. Nevertheless, Ms. Cooper had the doctor speculate on camera about biological issues on which he has no professional expertise, and he unwisely complied.

If the reporter had pursued the truth instead of gathering support for her biases, she might have had second thoughts about relying on Dr. Sheldon as an all-purpose expert.

According to Ms. Cooper, Dr. Sheldon told her that the amount of UV radiation reaching the Earth had been increasing due

self the expert.

She didn't ask the doctor for any proof to back up his speculations as long as he made statements she wanted to hear. Again, the story was constructed around her green biases, and those of her news department. The widely held view among experts in dermatology and radiation biology is that skin cancer rates have gone up because people have spent more time in the sun in recent decades. Sunbathing has its price.

Dr. Sheldon was also offered as an expert on the effects of UV radiation on plants. But, as mentioned, he readily admits that he is "not a biologist." He told me that he "is really not very familiar with the studies" dealing with the effects of UV on plants.

By contrast, botanist Alan Teramura, the leading expert on the effects of UV on plants, says that even with a 20 percent decline in stratospheric ozone (which is extremely unlikely to occur), "We wouldn't see plants wilting or fruits dropping unripened from their vines," due to increased UV. He says North America would experience "subtle shifts" which would increase the growth of some plants and crops, and decrease others. (Southern states, like Georgia and Florida, normally receive twice as much UV from the sun as a northern state like Minnesota.)

Verdict: The reporter relied on the uninformed opinions of her subject without requiring proof. She substituted her biases for scientific fact, and she showed a total lack of familiarity with the issue she was assigned to cover. She provided no evidence that UV radiation levels had increased, or that skin cancer rates are related to ozone "holes."

see TV ozone holes, pg. 10

Zoning Scrapbook

Prozoners paint zoning as a simple, pain-free solution to Houston's problems. They don't mention that many of Houston's new, modern buildings would have been outlawed if zoning had been in effect. Even churches will be crushed by miles of Red Tape. And yet, with all their bureaucracy and billions of wasted dollars, cities with zoning still have property being used in ways which zoning is supposed to prevent.



OK
Houston - Prozoners point to homes similar to this one as their argument for zoning. However, this house conforms to the proposed ordinance and would not be forced to change.



RED TAPE
Houston - Grace Community Church, which wants to make a parking lot out of this yard, is having to jump through bureaucratic hoops in the application process. Never mind that a new parking lot will get cars off the street.



OUTLAWED
Houston - This bank building is too tall to comply with the new ordinance. Has the Planning Department notified the bank of its future non-conforming status?



CONFUSING
Dallas - In the foreground a single family home sits next to a multi family dwelling. Prozoners in Houston claim that zoning will prevent this juxtaposition of uses even though it hasn't in Dallas.



OUTLAWED
Houston - Though a visual credit to its neighborhood, this building does not meet the proposed zoning ordinance.



CONFUSING
Ft. Worth - A high rise commercial structure rises above a single family neighborhood in this zoned city. Prozoners have used similar scenes in Houston as an argument for zoning.



OUTLAWED
Houston - These lovely new patio homes are on 3803 square foot lots, too small to conform to the proposed zoning ordinance's 5000 square foot minimum.



OUTLAWED
Houston - If single family homes only want other single family homes nearby, why is this single family home being built next to an apartment house?

Letters

We welcome letters from our readers. Send to: Houston Agenda, P.O. Box 7926, Houston, Texas 77270-7926. Or, fax to (713) 864-3056. Our E-mail address at America Online is "Agenda" and our Internet address is "Agenda@aol.com".

Dear Editor,

It looks like the proponents of zoning are continuing their program of misinformation and deception regarding zoning in Houston.

To begin with, they have tried to claim that deed restrictions do not work because (they claim) less than half the residential neighborhoods have deed restrictions. But their own survey, made by Stephen Klineberg of Rice University, showed that 80% of all homeowners in Houston live in deed-restriction neighborhoods.

Despite the claim that zoning is needed to protect residential neighborhoods, 80% are already protected by deed restrictions. Only about 2 or 3% of the city's land area consists of single family residences without deed restrictions. About 75% of the city is used for non-residential purposes, contrary to the pictures the zoners try to paint.

Now they are trying to claim that in 1962, when zoning was soundly rejected in a public referendum, the opponents of zoning waged a divisive campaign aimed at racial minorities. I was involved in that 1962 campaign and to the best of my knowledge racial issues were never raised in the anti-zoning campaign.

The truth is that the only real support for zoning came from the affluent white neighborhoods west of Shepherd Drive in southwest Houston. It is true that there was an economic diversity in the vote, but not black vs. white. Zoning was rejected in over 90% of the precincts in the other parts of the city. It was the lower income areas that defeated zoning, not the Black vote.

The 1962 campaign centered around the economic aspects of zoning, how much lower the housing costs were here, how much higher the cost of living is under zoning, how much higher the taxes would be, how much graft and favoritism there would be under zoning. It was economic issues that defeated zoning in 1962, not racial issues.

Meredith James

Seminar will examine private property assaults

A seminar on the regulatory assault on private property is being sponsored by the Free Enterprise Education Center (FEEC). The organization regularly



Jacob Hornberger

funds college scholarships for high school students based on their understanding of the principles of a free society and offers teachers the opportunity to earn

three hours of graduate credit while learning about free enterprise.

Paige Moore, director of programs for FEEC, says that government is violating our constitutional right to lives, liberty and property by seizing or freezing property or assets on mere suspicion that an offense has occurred. "The Fifth Amendment protects us from

being deprived of our life, liberty and property without due process of law."

"If you were told you had to screen your house from view from a road or move it or tear it down, that would violate your property rights. Or if FDA agents broke into your place of business and ransacked it and held you and your employees at gunpoint, certainly this would also be a violation of your property rights without due process of law. Yet these kinds of things happen with great frequency."

The seminar will take place on Saturday, September 11 at the Houston Racquet Club. The speakers will be Jacob Hornberger, founder of the Future of Freedom Foundation; David Howard, Vice-President of the Alliance for America; and Howard Baetjer, economist at the Center for Market Processes in Fairfax, Virginia.

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County manager resigns in rezoning scandal
Mayor arrested; charged with taking zoning bribes
Feds charge city with zoning discrimination against Jews
NAACP files suit to block zoning
Mayor and City Attorney resign in zoning dispute
Hispanics oust mayor and council over zoning bias
Citizens vote to repeal zoning ordinance

Zoning means graft, corruption, bias, discrimination and segregation

Zoning means political control of everybody's property, including yours. It is a powerful political tool that can be used for graft, corruption, extortion, favoritism, bias and discrimination.

The headlines above are from actual stories as reported by the *New York Times* in the last few years from major U.S. cities such as Atlanta, Miami, and Wayne, NJ. They show that graft and corruption is not just a possibility—it actually occurs. There is no way of knowing how much graft goes on that is not reported.

Zoning is also used for racial and economic discrimination and segregation in other parts of the U.S., as shown by cases from Florida, California, New Jersey and New York.

Zoning means taking away private property rights without compensation to the owner as required by both the U.S. and Texas Constitutions. Don't let them do it.

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TV ozone holes

from page 7

The man on the street is a health expert. It is standard in green stories to include an interview with an ordinary person; preferably someone who is deeply disturbed by the problem being discussed. In Ms. Cooper's story, she used a clip by a young woman who said she had developed asthma, and that it was caused by pollution. However, as Michael Fumento points out in his new book, *Science Under Siege*, "Being a victim of a disease does not make one an expert in how that disease is contracted."

What purpose did that young woman's opinion serve? Well, from Ms. Cooper's point of view it served to further dramatize her story by presenting a real-life victim. The journalistic purpose is to scare viewers out of their wits. You never see someone interviewed who says, "Problem. What problem?"

From a scientific point of view, the

gathered gave her support, Ms. Cooper still created a story which confirmed her prejudices. She found two experts who either disagreed with her views, or were not qualified to offer expert opinion. Did that stop her from building a story from the twigs which were left? No, she came back with exactly the story she set out for, and the facts didn't get in the way. She—and, more importantly, her news director—provided Houston with false, misleading, and exceedingly biased information.

Sadly, this is normal coverage of green issues, which are saturated with good intentions and bad reporting, and not just on local news programs.

Teya Ryan, senior producer of CNN's *Network Earth* series has said, "The 'balanced' report, in some cases, may no longer be the most effective, or even the most informative. Indeed it can be debilitating. Can we

When Ms. Cooper learned the nature of my questions, she was thoroughly defensive. She demanded to know, "What is the purpose for this interview?" After the first few minutes she said, "Let me tell you; let me call back the [KHOU news] desk. I don't know if I'm supposed to do this, but I will call you back if it is OK with them, alright?" I waited for her to call back, but she didn't until I phoned her news director and he said he didn't object to my interviewing her. He offered to call her and a few minutes later she called me back.

At one point in my interview she blurted "It sounds like you want to know what my

beliefs are." But to anyone who saw her report her beliefs were no mystery.

Even though she was audibly perturbed at my questioning, she continued. Once, near the end, she stopped to suggest to me, "You oughta go on Jeopardy."

You have to wonder why these aggressors of the airwaves have such thin skins. Maybe it's the ozone.

Nicolas S. Martin is executive director of the Consumer Health Education Council.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

KHOU responds to Agenda report

After completing my analysis of Ms. Cooper's report I read it to her on the phone so that she might correct any errors or respond to my criticisms. This is a courtesy which is rarely extended by the media to people whom they have interviewed.

Given the observations in my article about the sensitivity of reporters, I was hardly surprised that Ms. Cooper was miffed by what she heard. I was a bit taken aback, though, by the vehemence of her response. She went ballistic.

Rather than giving me the line-by-line defense of her news story that I was expecting, she ferociously reprimanded me for having wasted 40 minutes of her time interviewing her. She basically said that my story was incorrect in every detail. "You don't know what you're talking about," she insisted.

At least twice during our talk, I invited her to specify any part of my article that was inaccurate. She refused to do so, except to say that I was wrong in calling her a "novice" reporter. (I inferred that she was, based on her limited tenure at KHOU and her work quality.) I removed that description of her from the article. She provided no information to counter any other aspect of my article.

For my money, the most amusing and revealing part of the contretemps came after she accused me of misquoting her in one instance. As I remember it, I replied, "I have it on tape, dear." To which she shot back, approximately, "Don't you sexually harass me."

Could I have invented a more damning illustration of Ms. Cooper's fixation on "political correctness"? She not only knows all there is to know about the environment, she also bares her feminist fangs at the slightest provocation. I don't rule out the possibility that it will someday happen, but I think it will be several years before it is illegal to call someone "dear." When that day comes I'm sure Ms. Cooper will be happy to denounce me. Maybe during the hearings for my Supreme Court nomination.

Tit-for-tat, she charged me with being "biased," to which I immediately pled guilty. Unlike her TV segment, which was opinion masquerading as news, my article is frankly loaded with opinions. I assumed that would be obvious to anyone reading it.

Biased against television?

I also faxed a copy of my article to KHOU's news director, David Goldberg. Mr. Goldberg faxed back the following response, which has

not been edited or changed:

"My only response is instead of asking about the original intent of the story which was gleaned and supported by the Associated Press, Mr. Nicolas Martin displayed his own bias against television. By making the assumption that every word in Ms. Cooper's story was wrong, he proves that his mind was made up before he began working on his article. Certainly, science is not exact, but about her story the Texas Air Control board was holding hearings in Houston over Houston's poor air quality that was and is created by humans."

Why is there not a whisper in Mr. Goldberg's response about the factual errors in Ms. Cooper's report?

He ignores my specific criticisms, preferring to float a red herring about my "bias against television." But television is not the problem. The problem is shoddy, biased reporting under Mr. Goldberg's authority.

Candidly, I would not have been terribly put off by Ms. Cooper's obvious opinionating in her reporting if she could have gotten even one fact right in the process!

Mr. Goldberg refers to the Associated Press (AP). AP is a news service composed of reporters, not scientists. When the news director says that the "intent of the story was gleaned and supported by the Associated Press," I have no idea what he means. I surmise he might mean that the AP sent out a story about ozone and, since his staff didn't have any ideas of their own, they decided to ape the AP.

In what way does the AP "support" stories by KHOU? If Mr. Goldberg means that he trusts the AP as an expert source on science, he is a brave fool. The same is true if he simply accepts at face value the word of people who represent government agencies. His staff should show the same level of skepticism toward information supplied by the Texas Air Control Board or the EPA as by the police department. Repeating the contents of press releases is not the same as reporting.

To further augment my "bias" that Ms. Cooper's story was baloney, I contacted the City of Houston Bureau of Air Quality Control. They collect the data on pollutants, including ozone, and issue ozone "warnings."

While there had, indeed, been an ozone warning issued by the bureau two days before, there was no ozone warning issued the Sunday of Vicky Cooper's report.

What does an ozone warning indicate? It says that, at one of the six monitoring sites operated by the City of Houston, the ozone level in the air exceeded 0.12 parts per million. *see KHOU, pg. 12*



young woman's opinion is worthless. She can't possibly know whether pollution "caused" her asthma, nor can anyone else. Ms. Cooper admitted this to me, but in her view it doesn't make any difference whether the person she interviews is knowledgeable.

"I have no idea if pollution caused her asthma, or if pollution made it worse," the reporter told me. "She feels that it makes it worse; and that's what you put on television is what people believe about themselves. You don't make them stand up there and say, 'Well, no, prove this to me. Show me that this is statistically accurate.'" Don't confuse the viewers with facts, give them feelings.

There is no proof that pollution of any kind, much less ozone, causes asthma, although it may irritate that and other lung problems. Dr. Eschenbacher offers that it is "misleading" for journalists to use personal anecdotes—like that of the woman with asthma—to try to prove a scientific point. Worse than misleading, it is utterly dishonest.

Verdict: The reporter colored her story with unfounded, highly prejudicial comments by a person who has no expertise on science or her own illness. The comments of a bystander served to embellish the reporters biased view.

Even though none of the evidence she

afford to wait for our audience to come to its own conclusions? I think not."

Journalists, by and large, know little about science. They trust scientists only if the scientists confirm their prejudices. As Ms. Ryan demonstrates, they trust viewers even less. Many news operations—like KHOU in this instance—don't simply report the facts and let viewers draw their own conclusions. They manufacture evidence; they paint with their own biased brushes; they omit the inconvenient. In short, they produce propaganda with a heart. This is most evident on environmental stories, in which bias is flagrant, ignorant, and appalling.

Thin skins

Reporters are relentless in their pursuit of stories. We often see a microphone stuck in the face of a mother whose daughter has been gunned down, or a father whose son has just drowned. To hell with common decency.

Don't ever get the idea that members of the media can take what they dish out. There is no other occupation whose members are more reluctant to be scrutinized, less tolerant of being interviewed. It is quite typical for reporters to be insulting and sarcastic, and even disconnect callers who phone to challenge stories. In real life, journalists definitely do not act like they do on C-Span.

Ron Paul

Americans who challenge government are increasingly targeted and eliminated

Want some good news? Some degree of justice was done in Idaho. The trial of Randy Weaver, whose wife and son were murdered by federal agents, ended with Weaver and friend Kevin Harris being acquitted in the killing of a U.S. Marshall. The Marshall had shot Weaver's dog, and then his 12-year-old son in the back, during an assault on the



Weaver home in northern Idaho. Harris had returned fire and killed the Marshall.

The BATF and FBI had pressured Weaver to serve as an informer on his "white separatist" church friends, and he refused. So they entrapped him by having federal spies buy a shotgun from him that was 1/16th of an inch too short by federal standards. Weaver has now been found guilty for failing to appear for trial, even though the feds had given him the wrong date, and for the two trumped-up gun violations. He could still get 15 years and a half-million dollar fine.

The prosecutors built their case around allegations that Weaver's Christian Identity faith was fanatical, and that he was anxious to confront the federal government. In fact, all Weaver wanted was to be left alone—a federal

felony these days.

Instead of serving an arrest warrant in the normal way—although Weaver had committed no real crime, of course—200 armed feds in ski masks and camouflage clothes attacked his small home. Weaver never even fired his rifle, yet after killing his son, another agent deliberately flew his wife's head off as she stood in the door of their home holding their infant son. The FBI agent in charge said he had changed the "rules of engagement" to permit this federal murder.

The feds had a giant "fuel bladder" full of gasoline ready to drop by helicopter on the Weaver home, burning it and everyone in it to the ground in what is now familiar D.C. fashion. Thanks to Lt. Col. Beau Gritz, however, this was averted. Disobeying federal orders, he walked up to the Weaver home, prayed with the two men, and then escorted them and the baby out safely. Only the presence of media, in my view, prevented them all from being shot, so furious was the federal Gestapo at Gritz's "interference."

The agents responsible for the killings should be tried for murder. Instead, they are praised by the "Justice" Department. And the same was true, of course for the perpetrators of the Waco holocaust.

David Koresh's entire community of men, women, and children was deliberately butchered, yet the feds got off scot free, while the few survivors are being prosecuted and persecuted.

The feds made each of these cases a set piece in the continuing D.C. war on privately held firearms. But the real issue was authority. When Americans expose religious beliefs that challenge government power—especially to engage in racial redistribution—they are targeted.

In fact, as government gets bigger and therefore more vicious, challenging its authority become ever more dangerous, whether the issue is welfare, taxes, money, or foreign adventurism. And if the challengers couch their opposition in terms of their religious beliefs, they will be denounced as radical fundamentalists and legitimate targets of the U.S. KGB—even if they have never committed an aggressive act.

Dr. Paul, a practicing obstetrician, is a former U. S. Congressman from Lake Jackson, Texas. He authors a newsletter, The Ron Paul Survival Report, available at 1-800-RON-PAUL.



Dog days and zoning

What's hotter than the weather? The zoning debate. And the heat is driving some to extremes.

In an attempt to discredit arguments against zoning, State Rep. Garnett Coleman went before City Council a few weeks ago to try to discredit the campaign against zoning. He said that the 1962 campaign against zoning was an intentionally divisive campaign aimed at minorities and he hoped that this didn't happen this time.

But Mr. Coleman, who is too young to have been around in 1962, is incorrect. The 1962 zoning vote was 60 percent against zoning. Even if the Black vote is not included, zoning lost. Seventy-eight percent of all Houston precincts voted against it. If the affluent white areas of southwest Houston are not included, zoning lost by 92 percent! In short, the zoning decision in 1962 was made along economic lines. This outcome reflects what is true in so many zoned cities; that upper income property owners believe that zoning will exclude low income people from their neighborhoods.

Mr. Coleman's inaccuracy and accusation are part of what is now a tradition among dreamy pro-zoners. They spew rhetoric, eschew the reality of zoning in other cities, and accuse anti-zoners of anything they think the masses will believe under the rubric "scare tactics."

Jim Greenwood, for example, likes to give the impression that he favors the coming referendum on zoning. However, he fought doggedly against the referendum until 25,000 petition signatures were collected to force the issue. Now he says he was for the referendum all along. He's revising history the way he'll be revising the zoning ordinance—if it passes.

Planning head Donna Kristaponis, once upon a time, showed off a list of 73 Houston properties which she claimed were conversions of residential properties to commercial uses, and implied that these were detrimental to neighborhoods and therefore real life arguments in favor of zoning. What this newcomer to Houston didn't know or wouldn't say was that 80 percent of the properties listed were not conversions. Only 13 are located in residential neighborhoods. One property is on the corner of Main Street and Alabama and has been in commercial use as long as any Houston native can remember. Another listed property is on San Jacinto, a street with only five or six single family residences. Some neighborhood. If Ms. Kristaponis were using these exhibits in a court of law she'd be eaten alive by the opposing council—if the judge allowed her to admit them at all. More deception.

But we need not be surprised. These are the kind of scare tactics the pro-zoners have exhibited since they exhumed zoning three years ago. This time they label it "Houston-style zoning" so we won't confuse it with the monstrous bureaucracies of other cities.

Pro-zoners are full of rhetoric, but where are their statistics? They are full of promises, but where are the academic authorities who substantiate their claims? They constantly crow about "an open process" on this issue while they engage in secret meetings, keep documents secret. They have meetings where rooms full of people are allowed only fifteen minutes for questions after an hour of tedious zoning details.

Meanwhile, those fighting against zoning are always ready with facts, figures and named sources to support their arguments. Let's hope the public catches on before Houston is strapped with this expensive, permanent, highly political and corrupting bureaucracy.

—Kevin M. Southwick

HoustonAgenda

KEVIN M. SOUTHWICK
Editor

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A. MALLOY MAXWELL
President

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KHOU

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lion for at least one hour during a 24-hour period. That amount—0.12 ppm—is the limit the Environmental Protection Agency has set for acceptable ozone exposure.

Is exposure to that threshold amount—or an amount slightly higher—a cause of chronic lung disease? I refer KHOU, and my readers, to Dr. William Eschenbacher, one of Ms. Cooper's misused experts. He told me that "some experts at the EPA would like to

make a connection between pollution and chronic lung diseases, but we don't have the data [to prove such a connection]. Can it be stated any clearer; or clear enough for Ms. Cooper and Mr. Goldberg to understand?

Mr. Goldberg scolded me in his fax for overlooking "Houston's poor air quality that was and is created by humans." But how "poor" is Houston's air? Poor compared to what?

Here is what Ms. Cooper would have found if she had been interested. She'd have discovered that the number of days when ozone, at one or more of the City's monitoring sites, exceeds 0.12 ppm has dropped enormously. In 1980, there were 58 ozone

exceedence days (days over the limit). In 1992, there were just 18 ozone exceedence days. By my calculation then, the number of exceedence days dropped almost 70 percent between 1980 and 1992! Is this fantastic news? Is this the "poor air quality" to which Mr. Goldberg referred? (Notice how he assumes without checking his facts.)

Better yet, in 1993, Houston has so far had only four days when we have exceeded the ozone limit for at least one hour. Between January and May we did not have a single day over the limit. Then we had one in May and three in July.¹

Even referring to exceedence "days" overstates the problem. Remember, an ozone warning is issued if the limit is reached at a single monitoring site for a single hour. So far this year, the total number of hours that the ozone level exceeded the EPA limit is seven. You read right: there have only been seven hours during the first seven months of 1993 when Houston air exceeded the ozone limit. And don't forget that the exceedence may have occurred in only one place for one hour. It would be more explanatory to talk about exceedence "minutes" per year than exceedence "days."

Houston's seven exceedence hours amounted to 0.001 percent of the total hours

from January through July.

Furthermore, even during an exceedence, most people are not exposed to anything like 0.12 ppm of ozone, especially if they are indoors or in an air-conditioned car. There the levels are markedly lower.

Seven hours certainly isn't a great deal of time for ozone levels to exceed the EPA limit. Why, then do so many people think we are getting lost in the ozone?

The first reason is that there is a vested bureaucratic interest in generating panic. That is how some EPA officials keep their jobs. As an air quality official confided to me recently, the way in which pollution data are characterized by the government is "cooked up to alarm the public."

The second reason is that news editors and reporters simply can't bring themselves to believe that there is good news about the environment. They have been feeding us hysterical reports for so long that they can't break the habit. Dare I use the word cover-up?

1. The May exceedence was for three hours on one day. In July, there were two days with one exceedence hour each, and one day with 2 hours over the limit. The total is seven hours.

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